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Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY SAIGON
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USLO PEKING
DIA
CINCPACFLT
CINCPACAF
COMUSTDC
COMWEVENFLT
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 3095

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, CH, VS
SUBJECT: PEKING CELEBRATES ITS PARACELS VICTORY WITH AN EPIC POEM

SUMMARY: THE CHINESE HAVE GIVEN TOP BILLING TO A LONG EPIC
DEPICTING CHINA AS THE AGGREIVED PARTY IN THE PARACELS WAR
AND PRAISING THE HEROISM OF THE CHINESE INVOLVED THE POEM
DENIES ANY CHINESE INTENTION TO ENCROACH ON THE TERRITORY OF
OTHER COUNTRIES, BUT REASSERTS THE PRC'S CLAIM TO THE ISLANDS.
THE HEROIC STYLE IS PURE REVOLUTIONARY OPERA AND THE
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EPIC STRIKES US A REFLECTING THE CURRENT POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN

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CHINA. END SUMMARY.

1. PRC MEDIA HAVE CARRIED A LONG PANEGYRIC WRITTEN BY CHANG YUNG-MEI ON THE JANUARY CHINESE VICTORY IN DRIVING THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE FROM THE PARACEL ISLANDS. THE EPIC, ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN THE PEKING KUANGMING DAILY ON MARCH 15 AND HAS SINCE BEEN GIVEN TOP BILLING BY PEOPLE'S DAILY AND PEKING RADIO ON MARCH 16, AND THE HONG KONG COMMUNIST PAPER WEN WEI PAO (MARCH 18), TREATMENT USUALLY RESERVED FOR NEW REVOLUTIONARY OPERAS. THE EPIC PAINTS THE CHINESE VICTORY IN HEROIC TERMS, MANAGING TO PORTRAY THE CHINESE AS THE UNDERDOGS AND THE VICTORY AS ONE OF MEN OVER SUPERIOR WEAPONS.

2. THE POEM ("THE PARACELS WAR") PREDICTABLY DESCRIBES CHINA AS THE INJURED PARTY, REACTING IN SELF-DEFENSE TO AN ATTEMPT BY SOUTH VIETNAM TO ENCROACH ON CHINESE SOIL FOR TERRITORIAL AGGRANDIZEMENT AND ENERGY RESOURCES. THE POET

REAFFIRMS THE PRC CLAIM TO THE PARACEL, THE SPRATLY, AND THE PRATAS ISLAND GROUPS, CALLING THEM ALL CHINESE FISHING AREAS AND ASKING RHETORICALLY HOW CHINA CAN ALLOW THEM TO BE OCCUPIED BY BANDITS. HE ALSO REITERATES CHINA'S DETERMINATION NOT TO GIVE UP " AN INCH OF ITS LAND NOR A DROP OF ITS WATER," WHILE DISAVOWING ANY CHINESE DESIRE FOR THE TERRITORY OF OTHERS OR A WILLINGNESS TO ATTACK UNLESS ATTACKED.

3. IN THE POET'S TELLING, THE CHINESE CLAIM A SOUTH VIETNAMESE ("SAIGON PUPPET'S") SHIP WAS WARNED TO LEAVE THE PARACEL AREA BY FISHERMEN BUT INSTEAD IT AND A SECOND ONE ATTEMPTED TO RAM THE CHINESE FISHING BOAT. WHEN A CHINESE MILITARY VESSEL CAME TO THE RESCUE, THE PRC VESSEL WAS HARASSED BY A TOTAL OF FOUR VIETNAMESE WARSHIPS WHICH FINALLY OPENED FIRE ON THE CHINESE. FOLLOWING A 30 MINUTE BATTLE REPLETE WITH CHINESE HEROICS, THE PRC NAVY MEN ARE SAID TO HAVE SUNK A VIETNAMESE SHIP WITH HAND GRENADES (SIC) THUS "WRITING A NEW CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF PEOPLE'S WAR AT SEA." THE TEXT EXPLICITLY DENIES THAT THE PRC NAVY USED KOMAR-CLASS VESSLES OR STYX MISSILES. THE LAST SECTION OF THE POEM DEPICTS THE CAPTURE OF A VIETNAMESE-HELD ISLAND IN THE GROUP IN SIMILAR CONFIDENTIAL

REVOLUTIONARY OPERA-STYLE HEROICS.

4. WHILE EMPHASIZING THE HEROISM OF THE CHINESE FORCES AND THE LACK OF COURAGE OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE, THE POET MAKES A NOMINAL EFFORT TO ASSUAGE HANOI'S CONCERN BY REFERENCES TO THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE PEOPLE AND ATTEMPTS TO PORTRAY THE VICTORY AS A JOINT ONE FOR THE CHINESE AND THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE. THE EMPHASIS ON CHINA AS

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THE UNDERDOG IN THE BATTLE APPEARS AIMED AT DEFLECTING THE IMAGE OF CHINA BULLYING A SMALL NEIGHBOR AS WELL AS PROVIDING THE APPROPRIATE SETTING FOR HEROISM AND GUERILLA WARFARE TACTICS. THE UNITED STATES IS NOT REFERRED TO IN THE POEM EXCEPT IN A VERSE LISTING VICTORIES BY THE COMMUNIST FORCES IN THE CIVIL WAR, IN THE KOREAN WAR, THE CHEN PAO BATTLE, AND IN COASTAL DEFENSE. THE "LIBERATION OF TAIWAN" IS REFERRED TO IN STANDARD TERMS.

5. THIS EPIC IS PART OF AN UPSURGE OF REFERENCES TO THE PARACELS BATTLE. A MARCH 17 NCNA ENGLISH ITEM DISCUSSED TH DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANTI-LIN, ANTI-CONFUCIUS CAMPAIGN AMONG THE TROOPS OCCUPYING THE PARACEL ISLANDS AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ISLAND'S DEFENSE. AN INTERNAL BROAD-CAST ON MARCH 13 DISCUSSED THE CHINESE BUILD-UP ON ONE OF THE ISLANDS AND DETAILED THE EXPULSION OF AN INTRUDING BOAT. LAST MONTH, THE PARACELS VICTORY HAD BEEN PRAISED IN A CRITICISM OF ANTONIONI'S MOVIE (HONG KONG 1747).

6. COMMENT: ASIDE FROM THE OBVIOUS AIM OF PORTRAYING THE PRC AS THE AGGRIEVED PARTY AND AS USING ONLY MINIMAL FORCE IN DEFENDING ITS TERRITORY, THE FORM OF THIS EPIC STRIKES US AS REFLECTING THE CURRENT INTERNAL POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN CHINA. THE HEROIC STYLE OF "PEOPLE'S WAR" IS PURE REVOLUTIONARY OPERA AND WE HAVE SEPARATELY REPORTED A METAPHORIC REFERENCE IN THE POEM TO CHIANG CHING (HONG KONG 2997 AND HONG KONG 3094). AT THE SAME TIME, THE POEM REASSERTS THE PRC CLAIM TO THE SPRATLY AND PRATAS ISLAND GROUPS AS WELL AS THE PARACELS EVEN THOUG
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